

LETTER FROM MR. SYME.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Your correspondent Mr. Cowan, who attributes unprofessional conduct to me for having, in obedience to a remit from the sheriff, reported my opinion that his account for attendance in a case of fractured thigh should be reduced (viz. 4*l.* 17*s.* to 2*l.* 2*s.*), has omitted to mention, 1st. That when I was asked to see the patient, it had not been ascertained whether or not the bone was broken, though a week had elapsed since the receipt of the injury. 2nd. That the necessary apparatus was applied, and the treatment afterwards conducted, by my assistant Mr. Peddie. 3rd. That the straitened circumstances of the family made me decline any remuneration.

Trusting that you will not refuse an early place in your journal to these additional particulars of this *important** case, I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

JAMES SYME.

2, Forres-street, Edinburgh, Jan. 15, 1835.

MARYLEBONE INFIRMARY. — LETTER FROM DR. MARSHALL HALL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I purposely avoided reading the anonymous letters which have recently appeared in your pages, relative to the appointment of a physician to the *Marylebone Infirmary*. I considered that affair as terminated, as far as I was concerned, for ever. A friend has, however, induced me to relinquish my original purpose, and briefly to reply to the latter of those letters.

Your correspondent asks whether I *threatened* in my canvass, that if not then elected, I would never stand again. I answer—No! He next asks, whether I urged as another argument upon electors who are understood to wish for *permanent* officers, that I meant to resign after three years of office. I answer, If I did do so, *knowingly*, I acted in a manner equally

* Mr. Syme, in placing this word in italics, seems to have forgotten that until a charge of unjust and unprofessional conduct is proved to be ill-founded, it is always *important*, and that it is the bounden duty of journalists to afford every opportunity for the correction of the impropriety, or a denial of its existence.—ED. L.

guileless and unwise. But, in fact, I knew nothing of what the writer says was “understood.” What I did say was, however, printed, and I am proud to reproduce the paragraph here:—“In repeating my assurances of the utmost diligence in the discharge of the duties of my office, should I be the object of your choice, I beg to add that my design would be to devote three or four years to the most assiduous and unremitting attention to those duties; and then to resign my office, so that another might, in his turn, become a reaper of the benefits which your institution is calculated to confer.”

Your correspondent next asks, whether I further attempted to steal a march upon my competitors, by setting afloat a plan by which I must have gained a footing in the Infirmary without a majority of votes, viz., a scheme by which three physicians were to be immediately elected, instead of one successor to Dr. Hope (viz. two intern and one extern or assistant), which plan, as there were but three candidates, would, if successful, have enabled one to slip in without a contest; and whether I did manœuvre so well as to procure the consent of several of my supporters to my plan, at a second, for myself, unsuccessful discussion, at which it was again rejected, and within four or five days only of the final ballot. To all this I answer indignantly, No. I did not—jot or tittle—directly or indirectly!

I appeal to two highly respectable members of our profession, Mr. Cox and Mr. Mollison, for the truth of what I say. One or the other of these gentlemen was with me during my canvass, heard every word which I uttered, and witnessed every “plan” and “scheme” which I invented.

I would, finally, observe, that I do not think the office in question could be filled better than by the gentleman who has obtained it, or than by the second candidate on the list, who, I trust, will obtain it on the occurrence of the next vacancy. Still I must be permitted to say, that I think I ought to have had the appointment,* from various considerations, and especially as I, alone, had been a candidate before.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

MARSHALL HALL.

14, Manchester-square, Jan. 17, 1835.

* What! As a “reaper of benefits?” Upon what extraordinary grounds do the candidates for public medical offices, in which the *due care of the sick poor* is the object of the appointment, generally rest their claims!—ED. L.